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UNITED STATES MISSION
 TO THE UNITED NATIONS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

March 21, 1952

SUBJECT: Conversation with Soviet Delegate

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Aleksander A. Soldatov, USSR

Ambassador Francis B. Sayre - US Delegation

Last week, Mr. Soldatov, the Soviet Representative in the Trusteeship Council, asked me if Mrs. Sayre and I would dine with him. I was considerably surprised since he holds himself socially aloof and does not fraternize with Americans, -- or even, so far as I know, with other members of the Trusteeship Council. I accepted his invitation.

At dinner, we talked over many things, both personal and public. He told me that his mother is a Christian and still attends Christian services in Russia. He was born and baptized a Christian but abandoned that faith and is now an atheist. We spoke with much frankness of the wide differences in viewpoint between our two countries. Among many things he said that he was convinced that the peoples of neither country want war. He added, however, that his government was gravely concerned over the apparent intention of the United States Government to seek war.

He advanced the well-known thesis of the possibility of co-existence of communism and capitalism without war. He saw no reason for war between the two systems, believing that the better of the two systems would ultimately prevail because of its superiority in promoting human progress and human betterment. When I asked him which of the two systems is actually producing the maximum of human happiness and human progress, he answered, unhesitatingly, communism. And when I asked him what made him believe this, he said the record of recent history. Russia started only thirty years ago with almost nothing. During the years following the First World War, and prior to the Second, Russia had, he said, achieved magnificently; and now during the years following the Second World War, Russia is going forward again with great achievement. The pace of Russia's achievement, he said, was superior to that of the United States, which had started at the end of the First World War as one of the wealthiest nations of the world. I asked him who he thought was really the happier worker today: the American or the Russian. He replied, unhesitatingly, the Russian. He argued that freedom of speech does exist today in Russia and that even newspapers are free to criticize the policy pursued by the Kremlin. He also made the claim that freedom of religion exists in the Soviet Union today, and he spoke of his mother continuing her Christian worship in churches.

During the course of the conversation, he referred to the present election campaign in this country and asked who would win the election. To this, Mrs. Sayre replied that no one could possibly foretell what the result of an election in America would be, that this depends upon the deep feeling of the people which no one can predict. I myself made no reply.

I suspect that Mr. Soldatov may be acting under instructions to collect what he can of American expectations with regard to the coming Presidential elections.

Mr. Soldatov, who is of an intellectual type, and a former Professor of history, gives one the impression of being a sincere, misguided man who believes wholeheartedly in the integrity of the Kremlin.